



# U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

## Region 7 - Alaska

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**News**

For Immediate Release

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### **Bristol Bay Walrus Vulnerable to Disturbance**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game are requesting the cooperation of aviators and mariners to help minimize the disturbance of walrus in Bristol Bay.

Every summer, thousands of Pacific walrus come to shore in Bristol Bay between feeding cycles to rest at isolated haulouts. While using these haulouts, walrus are particularly sensitive to passing aircraft and boats, which, if too close, may cause the animals to stampede back into the water. Trampling deaths can result from haulout-disturbance stampedes. Such incidents are one of the primary causes of mortality among walrus and frequent or prolonged disturbances may result in long-term haulout abandonment.

Round Island is part of the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary, and all water vessels are prohibited from passing within 3 nautical miles of the island unless they have a permit from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Federal Aviation Administration recommends that all aircraft maintain a minimum altitude of 5,000 feet above ground level within a 3-mile radius of Round Island, and a minimum altitude of 2,000 feet above ground level within 1/2 mile of walrus haulouts at Capes Peirce and Newenham and Hagemeister Island within the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, and at Cape Seniavin on the Alaska Peninsula.

Please remember that any harassment of walrus or other marine mammals violates the Marine Mammal Protection Act and, if the disturbance involves an aircraft, the Federal Airborne Hunting Act. More information may be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the numbers above, or by contacting the Service's Marine Mammals Management office in Anchorage at (800) 362-5148, or the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge headquarters in Dillingham at (907) 842-1063.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

To report incidences of harassment contact:

US Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Division: 1-800-858-7621

More information on Pacific walrus can be found on the internet at <http://alaska.fws.gov/mmm/walrus.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,  
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